



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: Blue-Green Algae at Lindo Lake County Park

What is blue-green algae?

Algae are photosynthetic organisms that are a natural and important part of any aquatic environment.

Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, looks like algae, but it is actually photosynthetic bacteria. Like algae, it can be found in freshwater and marine aquatic environments. It also flourishes in water that is slow-moving or stagnant; thick with nutrients due to prolonged heat or drought. When the conditions are right, the bacteria can spread rapidly – the cyanobacterial growth forming a “bloom” that can produce toxins, known as cyanotoxins. Blooming blue-green algae can affect the local ecosystem, and the cyanotoxins can harm people as well as pets.

Blue-green algae has been more prevalent in recent years. This is due to a combination of extended periods of heat, and increased inputs of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus as a result of surrounding land uses.

Is there blue-green algae at Lindo Lake?

Due to the shallow nature of Lindo Lake and the warm temperatures experienced during the summer months, the presence of algae has been an annual seasonal occurrence at Lindo Lake. As a part of current and future projects to improve water quality at Lindo Lake, staff conducted testing to learn more about the algae and resulting water conditions. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) submitted a water sample to an independent laboratory for analysis and test results showed the presence of a cyanotoxin, caused by an abundance of naturally-occurring blue-green algae blooms in Lindo Lake. The toxin is water-based, but they can cause health risks resulting from recreational contact with the water, or if they are ingested (by drinking the water, or eating fish that live in the water).

Will this affect my use of Lindo Lake?

Lindo Lake remains open, and although a cyanotoxin is present, it will not affect the public’s use of the lake and surrounding park. All previously allowed activities, such as walking, bird watching and picnicking, are still allowed. Recreational contact with the water, such as swimming and boating, was not previously and is currently not allowed. Fishing is allowed, but since toxins are present, it is not recommended to eat any fish that are caught in the lake. Anglers should use catch-and-release practices.

Dog walkers are encouraged to exercise caution and refrain their pets from entering and or drinking water from the lake.

Are other lakes, rivers and bodies of water affected?

Lindo Lake is not the only body of water that has been affected by algae blooms; drought and warm temperatures have caused an increase in blue-green algae blooms across California and throughout the United States – in everything from freshwater lakes to rivers and streams. Cyanobacteria can occur in



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any fresh or marine water body under the right conditions, and are especially prevalent after dry seasons like summer. Recreational water users should be cautious about swimming, drinking, and cooking with water from areas with noticeable algal blooms.

How will the toxin be removed from the lake, and how long will it take?

DPR is working with the Department of Environmental Health to explore possible options for cyanotoxin removal. Additionally, natural environmental conditions, including cooler weather and increased rainfall, can help to reduce the occurrence of blooms, therefore reducing the likelihood of further cyanotoxin development.